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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 000732

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DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP, MYRA AHERN  
EMBASSIES FOR NAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2019  
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [ASEC](#) [PREL](#) [GT](#)  
SUBJECT: ATTEMPTED ARREST OF NARCO FAMILY

REF: STATE 68316

Classified By: A/DCM KAY ANSKE for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On July 21, 2009, DEA agents accompanied Guatemalan military and police units in the execution of search and arrest warrants in Reforma, Zacapa, Guatemala. The warrants were for the arrest of members of the Lorenzana family. No arrests were made. End Summary

¶2. (U) PRE RAID DETAILS: The Embassy received instructions to request that members of the Lorenzana family be arrested and extradited to the U.S. (See reftel.) Based on the information, the appropriate paperwork was completed by the Embassy's Consular Section and then worked through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Guatemalan court system. Warrants for Waldemar Lorenzana-Lima, Waldemar Lorenzana-Cordon, Haroldo Lorenzana-Cordon and Eliu Lorenzana-Cordon were issued. The whole paperwork process took less than 12 hours. Since the Guatemalan justice system does not/allow raids during the hours of darkness, the actual raid was delayed until the following day.

¶3. (U) RAID DETAILS: On July 21, 2009 at approximately 8:00 a.m., Guatemalan military, police, prosecutors, accompanied by advisors from U.S. Military (JTF-B), DEA FAST and DEA/Guatemala, departed the Guatemalan military ramp of the Guatemala city airport to execute arrest warrants for members of the Lorenzana Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO). Five locations in the village of La Reforma, Zacapa department, were to be raided in search of the Lorenzanas. The Joint Task Force launched using seven U.S. Military helos (2 Chinooks, 5 Blackhawks which included one medevac helo). All helos arrived to their assigned landing areas at 8:30 a.m. Note: There was one US injury (non-serious) on landing. End note.

¶4. (U) During the flight, DEA briefed the Chief of Defense (CHOD). The CHOD was surprised at the targets and commented that the Lorenzana family had very high connections in the Guatemalan Congress. At 8:30 a.m., DEA notified Ambassador McFarland who notified President Colom. President Colom indicated that he was aware of the operation already. DEA also notified the new Minister of Government, Raul Velasquez.

¶5. (U) Once on the ground, one of the locations experienced a small firefight with Guatemalan security forces which resulted in a lightly injured (grazed) member of the Lorenzana family, Ovaldino Lorenzana (for whom there was no arrest warrant). USG medics treated him and he was released. At the four other locations, there were numerous bodyguards, domestic staff and members of the Lorenzana family who were not on the wanted list. Large numbers of weapons and amounts of cash were observed, but not seized as the search warrants were only for the detection and arrest of certain individuals. According to DEA, the Judge who signed the arrest warrants refused to issue search warrants for anything other than the individuals on the list despite the fact that

our diplomatic notes requested the arrest of the individuals and the seizure and turning over of any evidence found. At approximately 11:30 a.m., all forces returned to Guatemala City without locating a target.

16. (U) POST RAID FALLOUT: The lack of success was documented heavily in the local press. The story broke on the radio before 9:00 a.m. and quickly spread to national newspaper internet outlets. Initial coverage through the afternoon referred to the exercise as a &DEA8 raid, saying there were as many as 120 &DEA agents.8 This slowly changed in the coverage to add the PNC. The embassy issued a statement at 3:00 p.m., with a short description of a &joint operation8 and the Embassy's Public Affairs Section called the major press outlets to reinforce the statement and to call attention to the joint nature of the raid. Coverage was the lead TV story that evening and on the front pages the following morning. Headlines were a mix of &DEA8 and &joint raid8 and characterizations of &failed8 raid also began appearing. Headlines were accompanied by largely sympathetic portrayals of the Lorenzana family, from photo essays of the luxury homes raided to stories of the many employment opportunities the family generated in the community. In the days that followed, large numbers of the local population in the areas influenced by the Lorenzana DTO demonstrated in support of the family. President Colom was quick to state that the &failure8 of the raid was due to a lack of intelligence, not due to leaks.

17. (C) COMMENTS:

- a. (C) Post was surprised by a comment from President Colom in which he claimed that the &failure8 was a result of bad intelligence. This is at odds with the Embassy's analysis of the situation. We believe that there was a breach of operational security (OPSEC) at either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in the court system. It may be impossible to discover the leak, and the requirement to work through Guatemalan authorities represents an ongoing vulnerability.
  - b. (C) Various senior members of the GOG clearly attempted to distance themselves from the raid by continuing to refer to the &DEA action8 (or words to that effect) and to claim no knowledge the Lorenzana family's issues. Post is concerned that this demonstrates either a lack of political will to fight narco traffickers or a genuine fear of retaliation from the DTO.
  - c. (C) The Lorenzana DTO has many contacts in both the executive and the legislative branches as well as in the private sector. Their influence and reach in the country cannot be underestimated.
  - d. (C) While the raid itself failed to capture any of the intended targets, the fact that Lorenzanas have had to go underground for the time being and no longer have the perceived shield of immunity is a positive step.
- McFarland